

# **To Study the Traumatic Past and Literary Afterlives in Bapsi Sidhwa's the Pakistani Bride and Ice-Candy-Man**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Cultural memory is one of the burgeoning fields of study which emerged in the beginning of the twentieth century with Maurice Halbwachs' seminal work on *memoire collective*. It is a useful umbrella term which refers to the complex ways in which individuals and society remember their past by using various means or a variety of media. The chapters of the thesis focus on the similarities between cultural memory studies and postcolonial study which are linked to certain political, social, and religious etc. issues raised in the selected novels which are representatives of different cultures having common aspects of colonialism and post-colonialism. It is believed that this approach will help to find a perspective for the assessment or analysis of the controversial memories of the unique past. All the selected novels are a part of commonwealth literature which represents the countries once ruled or colonized by the British or European colonizers.

**Keyword:** Cultural, Postcolonial, British, European

## **INTRODUCTION**

Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) was a philosopher and literary critic who was driven into exile in France in 1933 because of his Jewish origin. Historian Christine Fischer-Defoy edited the address book that Benjamin maintained during his exile. A unique book was published in 2006 by a Leipzig publisher. Photocopies and transcriptions of twenty-five handwritten pages and accompanying leaflets make up the volume. There's also some commentary regarding the book's origin and transmission, and some more in-depth remarks regarding the individuals listed by Benjamin and their often-changing addresses.

In what ways may this book serve as a primer on the field of cultural memory studies? Rather than focusing on the biological or psychological components of memory, theories of cultural memories attempt to understand memory in its whole, including its social, historical, philosophical, artistic, etc. dimensions. A *vade mecum*, like Walter Benjamin's address book, seems, at first look, to be a personal memory aid and, moreover, to include entries that the owner may not want the public to see. But an address book shows that people's memory isn't perfect and that there has to be a mechanism to save the needed information so it's always available, particularly when dealing with a lot of abstract and changeable data. Writing has functioned as a cultural tool to supplement human memory's limitations and as a medium for storing information for thousands of years.

A cultural artefact, Benjamin's address book is a product of his use of this method to aid his own memory. Even in its published form, this context rules the aesthetics of the address book; after all, the owner passed away in 1940, so the edition is more of a memorial to both the owner and the specific historical and political context in which the little book was utilized.

Publication of Walter Benjamin's address book exemplifies the paradigm shift that undergirds all theories of cultural memory: the shift from individual-level memories that are time-bound to collective-level memories that can be accessed by all members of a given group and passed down through the generations. The origin of the German word for "memory" (*Er-inner-ung*) still suggests that the methods, users, and processes of remembering cannot be characterised in terms of "individual" and "internal," however this is no longer applicable when discussing such a memory from a psychological or neurological perspective. In contrast, research on cultural memory has focused on the idea of a memory dependent on both individual and communal access to external storage medium. There are two meanings for the term "culture" when discussing cultural memory research.

Both in the sense that writing and computers are historically specific products of human communities and an aspect of their liberation from "nature" (or a "second" nature) and in the sense that the act of interacting with what is stored in this way establishes a link between specific and individual references, a "tradition," whether it's the oral performance of classical epics or the management of digital databases.

The edition of Walter Benjamin's *Addressbuch des Exils* permits two other crucial elements of cultural memory studies to be discussed, in addition to the transformation of individual memory matter into a storage medium and the reversal of an individual memory aid into a record of cultural memory: This address book dates back to the time when many prominent intellectuals fled the Weimar Republic in exile from 1933 to 1945 as a result of National Socialism in Germany. Benjamin left his home in Paris in 1933 and endured personal and economic hardship until 1940, when the persecution of Jews had spread to the French capital. He then tried to travel to Spain via Marseille but, realising his plan was doomed to fail, he took his own life in a border village in the Pyrenees. Keeping an address book in this context entails more than just planning for one's own forgetfulness; Benjamin himself changed addresses thirteen times during his seven years of exile, and he attempted to trace the complicated life stories of many others through his entries and revisions.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Peasant culture and communal memory have both been wiped out by industrialization this century. Within the decolonization and democratization movement, there is a basic loss of historical objectivity and memory. As a result, reviving our cultural traditions is much sought after. Not only do members of historically oppressed groups want to unearth their hidden histories, but so do members of traditionally dominant groups, minority groups, researchers, and intellectuals from all walks of life.

There is a high level of interest in learning about one's family tree. Genealogical history is also on the rise. With memory shifting from a societal to an individual level, the need to recall and safeguard one's identity has never been greater. Remembering the strength of internal compulsion is essential when we go from a general to a private context. Each person should take on the role of "memory individual" to the extent that their memory is not perceived collectively. He needs to refresh his memories. The psychologization of memory, according to Nora, "has thus given every individual the sense that his or her salvation ultimately depends on the repayment of an impossible debt."

According to Nora, There is a huge paradox around the preservation and loss of memory in contemporary memory research. There ought to be a balancing point between recuperation and disintegration, yet it often seems to be hanging by a thread instead. Alternatively, according to David Middleton and Steven D. Brown's "Experience and Memory: Imaginary Futures in the Past" article, we encounter various forms of remembering and forgetting in our daily lives, whether it's at home, at work, or in public or commercial organizations. These forms include language and text-based communication, objects, and place. Research in this area lays the groundwork for future studies in areas of social and psychological significance using lived experience. (Nonning and Erlil 241)

Because it connects colonialism to memory studies, the current study is noteworthy. Moreover, the chosen books that portray the cultures of nations that were once colonized bring up certain political, social, and religious concerns, which are explored in the research. In addition, this research delves deeply into the chosen books to examine how they depict the eradication and subsequent restoration of certain cultural traditions. Evaluating the chosen authors' moral, social, economic, and political concerns in relation to their successful handling of cultural memory and colonialism is another objective of this research.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Omondi Hillary Owino et al (2023) Throughout history, African literary authors have reflected and critiqued societal activities via various artistic forms. Works of art have several purposes beyond just entertainment and cultural preservation, including raising audience awareness and suggesting social action. There has been a lot of literary focus on the pre-colonial, colonial, and pre-millennium literature because of the issues they raise. For instance, in African studies, canonical authors and their impact on the region's political and economic history are often the centre of attention. On the other hand, few short tales written since the turn of the century have garnered any kind of critical acclaim. In order to uncover the sort of society that forthcoming authors are longing for, this study analyses the socio-cultural and economic rebirth in selected East African short tales created after the millennium. It aims to disclose the key issues of short stories written in the 21st century.

Using postcolonial theory as a framework, this study analyses five (5) short tales written by up-and-coming post-millennial authors and shows how the Millennium Development Goals impacted their themes. Modern authors, the article contends, are attuned to social concerns and, in the course of their work, seek to provide literary solutions to those problems. Adding diversity to the East African literature canon, the article also makes a contribution to it.

Chikwurah Destiny Isiguzo (2022) Postcolonial environmental studies, gender studies, and the relationship between environmental degradation and women's exploitation are all receiving more and more academic attention in Africa. Much of the prior literature on environmental exploitation in Africa fails to address the unique ways in which women experience both the environment and its effects. This research delves into the feminist portrayal of nature in *Petals of Blood* by Ngugi Wa Thiongo and questions patriarchal ideas that gender nature for the sake of highlighting its exploitation, similar to how women are exploited. The theoretical foundation of this research is an exploration of the junction of gender studies and postcolonial ecocriticism. Using the idea, we can see how environmental degradation and the exploitation of women go hand in hand. This article examines *Petals of Blood* by Ngugi wa Thiong'o and how the exploitation of African women's bodies relates to nonhuman nature via a critical examination of the female characters. The article contends that Ngugi acknowledges the effects of environmental exploitation on African women in *Petals of Blood*, draws parallels between the two forms of exploitation, and highlights the colonial, patriarchal, and capitalist ideas that prioritise both exploitations. Consequently, Ngugi envisions a kind of eco-awareness and action led by "gendered-people" who reject hegemony and exploitation in all its manifestations. This research shows that environmental justice and gender equality go hand in hand. It also implies that the idea that women and the environment are merely things to be exploited is at the root of the environmental exploitation in *Petals of Blood*.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Noteworthy theories and concepts utilized in this research include "collective memory" by Maurice Halbwachs, "social memory" and the mediality of memory by Emile Durkheim and Aby Warburg, "sites of memory" by Pierre Nora, "cultural memory," "collective memory," and "communicative memory" by Jan and Aleida Assmann of Germany, "individual memory" and "collective memory" by Vita Fortunati and Elena Lamberti, and "a few prominent features and concerns of contemporary cultural memory studies" as explained by Jane Marie Law. According to Vita Fortunati and Lamberti, memory studies is a great tool for facilitating collaboration in the field.

The cultural-historical viewpoint has been defined for the purposes of this research. A crucial component of this research is the narrative practice, which integrates many cultural practices, symbols, systems, etc. This narrative paradigm is shown by analyzing the chosen literature. Several of the fields or subprojects outlined by Fortunati and Lamberti in their article "Cultural Memory: A European Perspective" are applied to the chosen novels for analysis, including "Bearing Witness" and "Memory and Places" among five others. Erll and Nunning, pp. 133–137 (2007)

In creating and sustaining a national identity and culture, all of the chosen books serve as literary repositories of cultural memory. The deliberate formation of a national identity is another way of putting it. For any nation's culture to take shape, there must be numerous eyewitnesses, sources, traditions, and locations associated with the people, events, and circumstances that shaped it.

## **OBJECTIVE (S) /NEED OF STUDY**

1. To study the Traumatic Past and Literary Afterlives in Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride* and *Ice-Candy-Man*.
2. To study the Socio-Political Reality and the Parsi Ethos in Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* and *Family Matters*.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

*Ice-Candy-Man* (ICM) by Bapsi Sidhwa aims to analyse Ayah's (the novel's protagonist) experiences of kidnapping and rape in the context of Partition. Questions of belonging and rehabilitation, as well as the subsequent trauma, have been investigated. Ayah's story highlights the ways in which women are used as pawns in conflicts that males start amongst themselves and how trust within groups is shattered.

Pakistani author Bapsi Sidhwa (1938–) came to the United States in 1984. Her family is Parsi. Lenny, a Parsi boy of eight years old, tells the narrative of Partition in Sidhwa's 1988 book ICM. Partition was an occasion that Sidhwa revisits forty years after she was eight years old. Despite the fact that the story focuses on Lenny, a young narrator, and readers see the world through her eyes, the book delves into the experiences of Lenny's Hindu Ayah, attempting to reveal the several layers

concealed inside them. In Sidhwa's recollection of Partition, the oppression of women occupies centrality. Sidhwa (2016, April 6) reflects on the impact of Partition on women and says:

The memories of Ice Candy Man (ICM) from my childhood, when Partition was still fresh in my mind, lingered for quite a while. I was also perplexed by the fact that I overheard whispered discussions about someone's mother, sister, or daughter-in-law, which were clearly not intended for me to hear. Growing up, I learned that the hundreds of thousands of women who were abducted and raped during Partition were the subjects of their whispers, something I had no idea about before. No one I've ever met has ever spoken about losing a loved one. It would bring shame onto the family, thus that was the reason. Actually, the cruelty inflicted against the women served to degrade not just the family but also the women's racial and religious identity, whether it was Hindu, Sikh, or Muslim.

Sidhwa restates her beliefs on the experiences of women during Partition and the reasons behind them in an interview with Bhalla (2007):

When these fights escalate, it's usually the women who end up hurting the most. Those folks have their feet firmly planted in the dirt and could care less about the political process. They are startled to see that their bodies are the targets of severe assault. A woman's body is a symbol of her triumph. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that women were also brutalized during the Partition. The containers of a man's honour were thought of as these. It is not women who are the victims of assault, but rather the men to whom they are married. Watching one's own lady suffer abuse in front of him is an embarrassing experience for any male. Menon and Bhasin's (1998) analysis of the many forms of sexual violence against women echoes this sentiment. The authors describe it as "shocking not only for its savagery, but for what it tells us about women as objects in male constructions of their honour" (1998). Further expanding on this, they state:

The sexuality of women is a sign of "manhood"; any disrespect to this sacred emblem must be met with retaliation. But in the end, women are the ones who suffer the most brutal treatment because of the vicious logic behind all forms of violence. (page 43)

What Bapsi Sidhwa saw during the Partition events greatly influenced the development of ICM. Although they were not directly involved, the minority Parsi community was bound to get involved to some degree in the struggle for country and territory. Not only does the book detail one culturally marginalized community's reaction to Partition, but it also documents the tiny histories of people like Ayah, Hameeda, and the 'fallen ladies,' whose experiences would otherwise be lost in country narratives. The tale of Partition is retold from the perspective of a little girl who is emotionally vulnerable to religious differences, the unfathomable scale of the bloodshed and rioting, and the sacrifices women made to satisfy the vengeful men.

Shanta, a Hindu girl of eighteen years old, is Lenny's Ayah throughout the book. At first, Ayah's alluring figure is the focus of male admiration; later, during Partition, it becomes the target of male aggression. Men are drawn to Ayah because of her attractiveness, which is well described. She is encircled by men of various faiths, who form a circle around her. We get a detailed account of Ayah's bodily parts quite early on in the book. All forms of male gaze are rationalized by the sensual portrayal of a woman's attractiveness. "Holy men, masked in piety shove aside their pretenses to ogle her with lust.

Hawkers, cart drivers, cooks, coolies and cyclists turn their heads as she passes, pushing my pram with the unconcern of the Hindu goddess she worships. Even the elite become objects of desire for her," says Sidhwa (1989). Despite his unconscious attraction, the Englishman leading the Salvation Army finds himself captivated by her. "Of its volition his glance slides to ayah and, turning purple and showing off he wields the flag like an acrobatic baton" (Sidhwa, 1989). Within her inner circle of many male admirers, Ayah manages to maintain power and control while being objectified as an object to be stared at.

Regardless, Ayah neither fights nor gives in to this maturation of her feminine character. Her financial freedom, lifestyle choices, and sexual liberty are all preserved. Even as Ice-candy-man tries to sneak up on her, she manages to evade him. Later on, under the guise of love and vengeance, the Ice-Candy Man will use force to revoke this power and autonomy. The Parsi home is described as peaceful and harmonious, with only the odd disturbance caused by the fight between the godmother and slave-sister. This harmony is compared to the depiction of Ayah's beauty. The stunning physical and social rural terrain, the peaceful coexistence of men and women, and the picturesque Lahore garden and park all serve as echo chambers for the earlier and subsequent destruction of the lovely image of Ayah. Later on, the picture of the shifting terrain

and demographics that preceded Partition reflects the change in the Ice-candy-man's treatment of Ayah. The shift in Ayah's devoted following mirrors these developments.

Not only is Ayah's fan base huge, but it includes men of many different faiths. Around Ayah, there has been little change, and the community has come together to build a civilization that is generally peaceful. All faiths, including Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, and Parsi, stand together in her presence" (Sidhwa, 1989). It is inevitable that her admirers would act with suspicion and jealousy. "Where Masseur is, Ayah is," but the real show stopper is Ayah. The location of Ice-candy-man is where Ayah is located (Sidhwa, 1989). But as word gets out about the violence, people around Ayah start to act differently. Things have gone topsy-turvy, much as Ayah's admirers' attitude, which represented the tension that produced strife between various populations. The Queen's Garden is no longer a regular destination for us.

Wrestler's Restaurant is no longer on our list of places to eat. The group of those who hold Ayah in high esteem is divided" (Sidhwa, 1989). Masseur, hunching over his lungi, drops to the floor, and the men examine each other suspiciously; they are no longer rivals but rivals because of their religious beliefs. They resemble two whiskered dogs circling each other, each one offering advice and warning to the other (Sidhwa, 1989). The result is that Ayah's fan base shrinks. Lenny and Ayah start to worry about the whereabouts of the other guests since Masseur is the only one left: "I am disturbed." Also, Ayah. "I don't see anybody." She addresses Masseur to the others, including the gardener of the government mansion, the wrestler, the butcher, the zookeeper, the ice-candy guy, and everyone else in the gang. It seems like even Yousaf and Imam din have faded into the background. According to Sidhwa (1989), The smaller Ayah's circle becomes, the more terrible things are becoming. The religious nationalism that sparked Partition messed with people's daily routines. The extensive carnage coincides with the rise of animosity and competition among Ayah's followers. As a result of a lack of communal cohesiveness, Ice-candy-man "has openly expressed his jealousy of Masseur," startling Ayah and Lenny, and leading to extensive destruction and bloodshed (Sidhwa, 1989).

They were aware that the two were antagonistic, but they had no idea how bad Ice-candy-man's hatred was. There is growing discord among Ayah's adherents, and it is mostly focused on the difficulties in their personal relationships. Everything that began with Ice-candy-man's envy of Masseur culminates in his "exhilaration" over Masseur's deformed body. It also hints at the role that Ice-candy-man will play in the abduction of Ayah.

As the bloodshed has escalated, Sikhs and Hindus have fled to territories that were formerly considered part of India. Nonetheless, many low-income Hindus turn to Islam as a means of subsistence. The Parsi home, which includes Muslim inmates, has sheltered Ayah since he is Hindu. The fact that Ayah is in the Parsi home is not lost on Ice-Candy Man, however. He takes command of a large Muslim group and attacks Lenny's home. Ayah is concealed somewhere. No one, not even the Muslim Imam din, is willing to provide any knowledge regarding Ayah because of how sacred the mystery is. But he uses Lenny's naiveté to his advantage and finds out where Ayah has been hiding. Along with his Muslim supporters, he abducts Ayah, turns her into a prostitute, and then forces her to marry him against her will.

Since Lenny is the storyteller and Shanta are her Ayah, it stands to reason that they both see most of the events described in the narrative. This unites Lenny's experiences of seeing the Partition with the events surrounding Ayah, which are connected to the Partition. As Lenny observes little disputes and jealousies among Ayah's fans, he gets a taste of the larger-scale communal strife and bloodshed that will follow the Partition. In the years leading up to Partition, Ayah's devoted followers saw her as a force for religious tolerance and unity. The 'Hindu' Ayah, however, becomes a breeding ground for antagonism and bloodshed after Partition. As he goes from seeing her as a lovely lady before Partition to seeing her as a target of vengeance thereafter, the Ice-candy-man's "attraction" to her as a Hindu mirror this transition. During this time, the Ice-candy-man changes his perspective on Ayah, leading him to assume her identity. Initially, he perceives her just via her gender; subsequently, he recognizes her as a Hindu. Her kidnapping is caused by her eventual revelation of her Hindu identity.

## **CONCLUSION**

The concept of a connection between "memory" and "culture" is not novel. It was earlier in 1910 that Arnold Van Gennep brought it to light. Memory, he said, was connected to both religious tradition and the laws and norms of political groups. No one can ever forget Maurice Halbwachs's role in the concept's early development. He went beyond the usual boundaries of fields and nations. Not to be overlooked is the work of Aby Warburg, who made significant contributions to our understanding of the cultural and social significance of remembering in the early 1900s. 'Culture' and 'memory' were



informally linked in the 1970s by the Moscow-Tartu semiotic school. This was the foundation of Heidelberg's idea. Next, the evolving roles of French memorial places within the context of post-traditional lifestyle were the subject of Pierre Nora's groundbreaking multi-volume study on lieux de memoire, which centered on the building of a communal memory with national significance. A group of American academics has lately mobilized introspective "cultural memory"—a term that has deep historical roots—to combat the erasure of particular groups' histories and memories. This study provides a foundational step towards conceptualizing cultural memory studies by bringing together the progress in memory studies from social and cultural viewpoints in a more unified fashion. Additionally, it unites many perspectives from memory research across disciplines and countries.

It also gives a synopsis of its background and essential ideas. Thanks to this foundation, we can provide some definitions to a new area that is gaining traction on a worldwide scale. It is possible to see this international research on cultural memory as an effort to save regional and national identities. This research aspires, among other things, to encourage scholars to build a new series of transnational research projects that promote memory studies across disciplines and to inspire transdisciplinary scholars to conduct more thorough, organic, and fascinating research in this rapidly growing field on a global scale.

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